

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST

Project: Status Surveys for Endangered Bakersfield Cactus (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*)

Date: August 25, 2009

Nature of Action: Provide \$65,627 from the Central Valley Project Conservation Program to Endangered Species Recovery Program (ESRP) to document the presence or absence of Bakersfield cactus (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*) at reported California Natural Diversity Database occurrence locations. This documentation will include; the number of individuals present in extant populations; assessment of current habitat conditions; identification of actual and potential threats to the populations at each site and the development of recommendations for conservation and management of extant Bakersfield cactus populations.

Locations: see attached map

Exclusion Category: B (2): Research activities, such as nondestructive data collection and analysis, monitoring, modeling, laboratory testing, calibration, and testing of instruments or procedures and non-manipulative field studies.

Evaluation of Criteria for Categorical Exclusion

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| 1. | This action or group of actions will have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 2. | This action or group of actions will involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.
. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 3. | This action will have significant adverse effects on public health or safety. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 4. | This action will have an adverse effect on unique geological features such as wetlands, wild or scenic rivers, rivers placed on the nationwide river inventory, refuges, floodplains, or prime or unique | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |

farmlands.

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| 5. | This action will have highly controversial effects. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 6. | This action will have highly uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risk. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 7. | This action will establish a precedent for future actions. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 8. | This action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant environmental effects. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 9. | This action will adversely affect properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historical Places. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 10. | This action will adversely affect a species listed or proposed to be listed as endangered or threatened. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__
On June 29, 2009, Reclamation initiated informal consultation with the Service on the activities for projects in the CVPCP and the HRP for Fiscal Year 2009. The Service concurred on September 28, 2009 that the projects, including this study, are not likely to adversely affect listed species. |
| 11. | This action threatens to violate Federal, state, local, executive or Secretarial orders, or tribal law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |
| 12. | This action will affect Indian Trust Assets. | No <u>✓</u> Uncertain__ Yes__ |

13. This action will have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on low income or minority populations. No ☒ Uncertain ☐ Yes ☐
14. This action will limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites. No ☒ Uncertain ☐ Yes ☐
15. This action will contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species. No ☒ Uncertain ☐ Yes ☐

NEPA Action: Categorical Exclusion ☒ EA ☐ EIS ☐

Environmental commitments, explanation, and/or remarks:

The proposed project consists of conducting surveys to determine the current state of the historical occurrences of Bakersfield cactus throughout its range. The project proposes to conduct status surveys to determine which populations are still extant, their size, and current habitat conditions. Threats to each population also will be assessed. Surveys will be conducted by visiting each population for which access is granted. Populations for which access is not granted still will be assessed to the extent possible either from adjacent properties, remote sensing photography, or aerial reconnaissance.

Currently, the range of Bakersfield cactus consists of scattered fragments of once larger populations. Nearly half of the occurrences presumed to be extant have not been reconfirmed or evaluated for approaching a decade or more. Although some of these fragments occur on protected lands, an increasing number are surrounded by incompatible land uses and are subject to frequent disturbance from destructive trespass activities. Also, some of the remaining cactus populations are on private parcels where developments are planned. The numerous field sites that will be visited during the course of this project are scattered around the southeastern portion of the San Joaquin Valley (Fig. 1).

This species is listed as Federally Endangered and California Endangered. Bakersfield cactus is endemic to and therefore limited to the southeastern corner of the San Joaquin Valley. Many sites with Bakersfield cactus have been converted to agricultural and urban uses, and approximately one-third of historic cactus locations have been lost. Many remaining populations are at risk, particularly from rapidly expanding urban development near the city of Bakersfield.

The information gathered during this status survey will be used to prioritize populations for conservation efforts (e.g., acquisition, fencing, etc.) and to develop measures to mitigate impacts to extant populations. This information also will be critical to revising and improving existing conservation and recovery strategies, including the Metropolitan Bakersfield Habitat Conservation Plan.

Preparer's Name and Title: /s/ Carolyn Bragg
Carolyn Bragg
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Date:

Regional Archeologist concurrence with Item 9: See attachment

ITA Designee concurrence with Item 12: See attachment

Concurrence:

/s/ John Thomson Date: _____
Program Manager, Central Valley Project
Conservation Program

Approved:

/s/ Mike Chotkowski Date: _____
Regional Environmental Officer

